



Ronald Harrison Jeffers

March 25, 1943 - August 22, 2017

Ron Jeffers, age 74, passed away on August 20, 2017 after a long struggle with Parkinson's.

He was born on March 25, 1943 in Springfield, Illinois to Florence and Virgil Jeffers.

Ron studied composition and choral conducting at the University of Michigan where he was a tenor soloist with the men's Glee Club. He continued studies at Occidental College and the University of California, San Diego. After brief appointments at the University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire and Stony Brook University he taught 25 years at Oregon State University.

Ron was a choral conductor, composer, and photographer. He founded the music publishing company, earthsongs, and wrote and edited several volumes on choral repertoire.

He is survived by his wife Becky; son Alan; daughter Robin, with partner Brian; and grandson Oscar.

No memorial service is planned. Donations can be made, thank you, to Community Outreach, Inc. in Corvallis.

The family extends sincere thanks for excellent care to Judy and the staff at Holistic Hands.

Tribute Wall

BK

“Becky, I hope this message gets to you. I was a freshman at the University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire when I met, and sang under your husband. We had it so good. I Cantori was our name and we challenged the Concert Choir with musicality and professionalism that before Ron's tenure there had never happened before. Unfortunately, he was that good. Morris Hayes made sure that he was toast after his first year. But that didn't stop him from giving those of us who had the honor of singing under him from getting the best choral education we could have ever had.

Ron was one of those gifted individuals who you don't come across every day. I feel extremely fortunate to have had him in my life, even if it was for only a year. I remember him coming into to the choir room, all of us were talking and socializing as always, he was writing on the blackboard, and then he turned around and yelled "WHY?" You could have heard a pin drop at that point. Of course, we were studying Brahms's VARUM? at the time, and he certainly got our attention.

Ron put us into quartets, and then we would have to perform in his office for a grade. I was so tortured back then, in between second soprano and first alto.....my voice teacher was leaning toward dramatic soprano. And we sang a piece for him, I think it was Faure, and I sang soprano, and your husband came up behind me after we were finished and placed his hands firmly on my shoulders, and said, "I never would have thought you could have done that!" And that has stuck with me for all these years.

I went on to have a great singing career in the Twin Cities with the paid Ensemble group of VocalEssence, and also as a paid section leader at Westminster Presbyterian. Your husband had everything to do with that, God bless him!! Just wanted you to know.

FYI, I lost my husband of 31 years in 2013, so I know how hard it is. I'm sure you and Ron had an incredible marriage and relationship!!!!

Barb Kastens (Foard)
Entering class of 1972

Barbara Kastens - February 07, 2020 at 10:48 PM

RM

“ I sang under Ron when he directed Ann Arbor's First Baptist Church Choir while he was finishing up his studies at the University of Michigan, he directed us from 1967 to 1969, as I recall. Around 1963 I remember seeing his picture in one of the U of M football game programs in re his involvement in, as I recall, MUSKET, a student musical organization of which he was a leader, implying that Ron was a man with a future.

Ron was a pretty serious and demanding choir director, tho he tempered the rehearsals with patience and a dry sense of humor.....you usually need that with a Church Choir! He composed a piece, like a small oratorio, based on/inspired by the 1967 Detroit Riots

(Ron was pro civil rights, and our Church is 'Northern', not Southern Baptist, our Minister led protests against the draft and set up a draft counseling center in the Church office---so Ron fit in well!) featuring wind instruments from the U of M music school, and using tape recorded sounds, voices from the riots, very experimental in those days, and we had a 'full house' in Church for its performance. We also performed music composed by some of teachers (I believe) at the Music School, the names of Ross Lee Finney and Leslie Basset come to mind, and maybe Eugene Bossart, John McCormack's last accompanist, who founded the U of M accompanying department, back in 1952.

On Ron's last Sunday in our Church, before moving on to bigger and better, Rev. Middleton brought Ron down in front (we sang in the back balcony, Organ Prof. Robert Noehren was our organist, WHAT A TEAM!) congratulated him, thanked him for his service and said "Ron Jeffers is a GOOD man"! And it sounds like he stayed that way.

I haven't seen him for 50 years, but am sorry to (belatedly) read of his passing, and would like to extend my sympathy to his family.

God Bless the Soul of Ron Jeffers!

Robert K. MacGregor

Robert MacGregor - December 10, 2018 at 04:46 AM



K.c.
Cowan

“ I feel so lucky to have gotten into Ron's choir -- Probably a "pity" pick! But I learned so much, he expanded my knowledge a huge amount, and while I didn't always like every song he picked at first...they all grew on me in time.
Of course, our 1978 choir tour was an epic adventure that none of us who were on it will ever forget.

*much love to Becky and the kids -- Ron was a wonderful musician and I am so glad to have known him.
KC Cowan-Micallef*

K.c. Cowan - September 09, 2017 at 06:49 PM



“ 1 file added to the album Ron's Photos



David Gatewood - September 09, 2017 at 02:10 PM

DJ

“ Ron was my older brother. We were only two and a half years apart in age. Childhood memories consist of playing Indian ball all day long at Jeske Park every summer day. Jeans and white t-shirts were the accepted dress code. I also remember playing basketball and wrestling in the back yard. We would shine a light out of the bedroom window so we could keep playing after dark. Ron grew quickly and was the starting center on the junior high basketball team but he quit growing and so his basketball career ended before high school. He was a little league pitcher and even pitched in Bush Stadium one year as an all-star. Once in high school, Ron's interest turned to music. God gifted Ron with an amazing tenor voice and he excelled in music theory and composition. I didn't get to spend a lot of time together with Ron as an adult, we lived on opposite sides of the country. One of my last memories was when I visited Ron a couple of years ago in Corvallis and we sang some songs together one evening in the care home he was living in. Ron's gift of creativity spilled over into photography where he was able to see beauty in things most of us pass by every day. One of my favorite photos of his, from his Alley Art collection, will always be on display in my home or office. On my last visit, I was able to get a picture of Ron by the place where he shot the picture. I will always treasure the time we had together but will miss his gift. I pray for God's peace for the family.

Dave Jeffers - September 01, 2017 at 05:45 PM

EH

“ Ron was amazing. He always had jokes to share and made me laugh. I will happily remember him for the beautiful opportunity he gave me to work at Earthsongs-- the birthday parties, the random songs, the timed challenges to pull and sort as much music as possible, the wonderful way he was able to touch so many peoples' lives with music. My thoughts are with the family. Please let me know if you need anything :)

Erin Hunter - August 30, 2017 at 11:33 PM

LA

“ *Linda Brown Arata lit a candle in memory of Ronald Harrison Jeffers*



Linda Brown Arata - August 29, 2017 at 01:33 AM

LW

“ *Leslie Wood lit a candle in memory of Ronald Harrison Jeffers*



Leslie Wood - August 27, 2017 at 09:00 AM

CA

“ *The Beatrice Miller Family is thinking of you Becky and your wonderful children at this most difficult time. I know if Mom were here she would want to play at Ron's service. Lots of love and caring coming your direction.*

Cindy

Cindy Miller Aron - August 26, 2017 at 04:34 PM

CA

“ *Cindy Miller Aron lit a candle in memory of Ronald Harrison Jeffers*



Cindy Miller Aron - August 26, 2017 at 04:33 PM

KS

“ I will never forget working with Ron during my very first year with the Peninsula Women's Chorus in 1997. He came to our retreat and held us together during a very difficult time. His kindness, generosity of heart, and of course his great music made a lasting impression on me. Over the years, I have performed many pieces of his including his beautiful arrangement of Amazing Grace that touched me in a way no other arrangement ever has. In the Spring of 2018 I will have the honor of performing his compositions "This I know" and "We Wake the Day" from Indian Singing. I know his music will live on around the world and his memory will be honored. Ron Jeffers will be greatly missed. Rest in peace.

Kyle Sofman - August 24, 2017 at 06:44 PM

LA

“ I first met Ron when he came to SU Stony Brook. I was in his choirs and became his voice student. What a gifted musician and teacher! I moved all the way to Corvallis to continue studying with him. He brought deep artistry and intellectuality to his music, and I am grateful to have been his student.

Linda Brown Arata - August 24, 2017 at 12:27 AM